



The Regional Municipality of Durham
Community Social Investment Program Application
Funding Guidelines

Please visit, [Durham.ca/CSIP](https://durham.ca/CSIP), for important dates

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About The Region of Durham

Durham Region is a great place to live, work, and build a life. The Region delivers a broad range of programs and services to a growing and increasingly diverse population of residents, businesses, and visitors. According to the 2021 Census, Durham Region's population was 696,992, representing an increase of 7.92% since 2016¹. An estimated 45,800 residents (approximately 6.6%) are living with low income.

By 2041, Durham's population is forecasted to reach one million residents, placing sustained pressure on housing, infrastructure, and human services². Locally, we are already experiencing an increased demand for human services as the needs of Durham residents become more complex.³

Durham's non-profit sector plays a vital role in delivering critical services to residents, building and strengthening communities, and contributing to economic stability of the Region. The Regional Municipality of Durham is committed to investing in this sector through the Community Social Investment Program (CSIP), administered by the Social Services Department. CSIP reflects the Region's commitment to helping sustain and strengthen the local non-profit sector so it is better positioned to respond to the growing and increasingly complex needs of Durham communities.

Community Social Investment Program

The purpose of the Community Social Investment Program (CSIP) is to support the allocation of social services investments to non-profit organizations that enhance and strengthen human services across Durham communities. The CSIP supports local organizations whose mandates focus on reducing poverty, addressing social inequities, promoting wellness, and supporting communities to thrive.

The program provides a standardized, transparent process for issuing public funds, ensuring regional investments are aligned with community needs and strategic priorities.

Program Principles

The following principles guide the design, engagement, and decision-making processes for the Community Social Investment Program:

Dignity and Belonging: Healthy and resilient communities provide opportunities for civic engagement and participation for all residents. Ensuring that individuals and families have a voice and a sense of belonging within their community is essential.

¹ [Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Durham, Regional municipality \(RM\) \[Census division\], Ontario \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-62-001/2021001/article/00001-eng.htm)

² [Demographics and Statistics - Invest Durham](#)

³ Durham Community Foundation. (2023). Together we Thrive: Durham's Vital Signs Report 2023. Available from: [VitalSigns-Report-11-24-23.pdf \(durhamcommunityfoundation.ca\)](#)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Investments reflect Durham's diversity and advance equity by supporting organizations that prioritize equity-deserving communities through inclusive, culturally responsive programs and services.

Impact: The program prioritizes investments that aim to prevent poverty and improve quality of life, particularly initiatives that help divert residents from more costly emergency or downstream services.

Collaboration: Recognizing that complex social challenges require collaborative approaches, CSIP encourages partnerships that align resources, coordinate services, and leverage shared expertise to address community needs.

Accountability: Transparent reporting and evaluation processes support trust-based partnerships, with an annual report to Council highlighting funding decisions, strategic alignment, and stories of community impact.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Collaboration and partnership are core principles of the CSIP. CSIP recognizes that many of the complex social challenges facing Durham communities cannot be addressed by single organizations working in isolation.

Partnerships may strengthen applications by:

- Leveraging complementary skills, expertise, and resources
- Reducing duplication and increasing efficiency
- Expanding reach and impact
- Supporting sustainability beyond the funding period

Partnerships may be formal or informal, and may include, but are not limited to:

- Service delivery partners
- Sector networks or coalitions
- Capacity-building supports (e.g., governance, planning, training, evaluation)
- Funders or fundraising partners
- Advisory or lived experience contributors

CSIP recognizes that not all organizations, particularly grassroots or emerging organizations, will have established partnerships. Applications without partnerships will not be disqualified, however, applicants are encouraged to describe how collaboration has been considered in the design and delivery of their proposed activities.

Partnerships will be considered as part of the overall assessment of project design, impact, and sustainability.

Program Design and Oversight

The CSIP provides the foundation for a transparent application process, including clear eligibility, evaluation, and reporting criteria. The program includes multiple streams to support innovative and flexible investments, with variations in funding terms, eligibility requirements, and priority focus areas.

Funds will continue to evolve based on annual Regional budget approvals, program evaluation, and ongoing feedback from community partners.

The Social Services Department oversees the CSIP as part of its broader human services delivery role. The program also aligns with the Department's priority to advance a Poverty Response Program. Investments through CSIP support healthy, resilient communities for all by preventing and addressing poverty across Durham Region.

CSIP recognizes the value of community partnerships for responding to poverty reduction efforts. Accordingly, the Thriving Communities Fund and the Sustainable Food Security Fund prioritize activities that involve collaboration, where partnerships are appropriate to the proposed outcomes.

Funding Streams

A. Thriving Communities Fund

The Thriving Communities Fund supports non-profit organizations with a demonstrated mandate and/or proven efforts to prevent or reduce poverty across Durham communities. The Fund invests in operational and capacity-building activities that strengthen organizations' ability to deliver key programs and services to residents and contribute to a thriving region.

Funding through the Thriving Communities Fund is intended to support activities that strengthen long-term sustainability in meeting the priority needs of Durham residents experiencing or at risk of poverty. Funding is expected to achieve identified outcomes within the 12-month funding term. Subsequent Thriving Communities Fund requests are not eligible to continue a previously funded program or initiative. All funded projects are assessed during the funding term for effectiveness and progress toward intended outcomes by using data gathered through reporting requirements and key performance indicators.

Sustainability in this context refers to the ongoing value or capacity that continues beyond the funding term, rather than continuation of the funded program itself.

Eligibility and Project Scope

Proposals must outline activities with a distinct scope of work that differs from, or innovatively expands upon, any activities previously funded through the CSIP or other

Regional funding. The Thriving Communities Fund is not intended to create program dependency, duplication, or reliance on this funding.

Enhancements to existing programs are eligible only where they represent a significant addition, rather than a continuation of current operations. For example, adding cold storage capacity to an indoor farming program currently funded through CSIP to increase the storage life and distribution of fresh produce would be considered an eligible enhancement.

Funding Amounts and Timelines

Organizations may be approved for funding of up to \$50,000 per application, with a limited number of applications funded, subject to annual budget approval.

Funding is provided for a 12-month term, and all approved funds must be used within that time.

Detailed timelines, including program launch dates and application deadlines, will be published on [Durham.ca/CSIP](https://durham.ca/CSIP).

Budget Composition and Sustainability

CSIP prioritizes investments in sustainable activities that strengthen long-term community capacity and outcomes. As a general guideline, applicants are expected to allocate the majority of the total project budget to sustainable activities, such as program delivery, capacity-building, infrastructure, training, or systems improvements.

Requests where bursaries, gift cards, or direct financial assistance represent a significant portion of the budget will be assessed carefully. The Region reserves the right to approve, condition, or decline applications where the proposed budget composition does not sufficiently demonstrate sustainability, impact, or alignment with CSIP objectives.

Previously Funded Projects

Examples of projects previously supported through the Thriving Communities Fund include:

- A program providing skilled trades training and wrap-around supports to vulnerable individuals in Durham Region to help them secure sustainable employment and reduce poverty.
- A non-profit organization strengthened its long-term capacity by hiring a consultant to develop a fundraising strategy.
- A project empowering seniors by improving access to low-cost nutritious food, including takeaway meals and cooking classes, to enhance nutrition and overall well-being.
- Expansion of outreach services and programming for equity-deserving women, including those living with HIV, experiencing gender-based violence, poverty, and substance use, to promote health, wellness, and social connection.

B. Sustainable Food Security Fund

The Sustainable Food Security Fund aims to address food insecurity in Durham Region by supporting sustainable, long-term solutions that strengthen the local food system. This funding stream supports innovative projects that enhance the resilience and efficiency of the community food security sector while promoting dignity.

Recognizing the critical role of existing community food programs in meeting immediate needs, the Fund prioritizes initiatives that move beyond short-term food provision and contribute to system-level improvements that improve food security outcomes for Durham residents over time.

Objectives

The Sustainable Food Security Fund supports projects that advance one or more of the following objectives:

- Contribute to sustainable food security solutions
- Promote dignity and choice for users of food programs
- Increase efficiency within local food distribution systems
- Build the capacity of existing community food programs
- Increase access to fresh, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food

Eligibility and Project Scope

Proposals must outline activities with a distinct scope of work that differs from, or innovatively expands upon, any activities previously funded through the CSIP or other Regional funding. The Sustainable Food Security Fund is not intended to create program dependency, duplication, or ongoing reliance on this funding.

Enhancements to existing programs are eligible only where they represent a significant addition, rather than a continuation of current operations. For example, adding cold storage capacity to an indoor farming program currently funded through CSIP to increase the storage life and distribution of fresh produce would be considered an eligible enhancement.

Funding Amounts and Timelines

Organizations may be approved for funding of up to \$50,000 per application, with a limited number of applications funded, subject to annual budget approval.

Funding is provided for a 12-month term, and all approved funds must be expended within that time.

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Budget Composition and Sustainability

CSIP prioritizes investments in sustainable activities that strengthen long-term community capacity and outcomes. As a general guideline, applicants are expected to allocate the majority of the total project budget to sustainable activities, such as program delivery, capacity-building, infrastructure, training, or systems improvements.

Requests where bursaries, gift cards, or direct financial assistance represent a significant portion of the budget will be assessed carefully. The Region reserves the right to approve, condition, or decline applications where the proposed budget composition does not sufficiently demonstrate sustainability, impact, or alignment with CSIP objectives.

Previously Funded Projects

Examples of projects previously supported through the Sustainable Food Security Fund include:

- Strengthening local food systems through partnerships with local farmers, including the distribution of seasonal, locally grown produce to food programs across Durham Region and the delivery of on-farm workshops to build food literacy and community connection.
- Improving food security and social connection for low-income seniors in rural communities, through the expansion of community-based meal programs that provide fresh, nutritious meals, food vouchers for local markets, and supportive food education resources.
- Expanding dignified, stigma-free access to nutritious food for children and families, by establishing satellite food distribution hubs in school communities and strengthening partnerships with local school boards and service providers.
- Increasing sustainable, year-round access to fresh food by investing in innovative food production and infrastructure, including community gardens, edible garden mentoring programs, cold-storage expansion, and local vertical farming initiatives that reduce reliance on external supply chains.

General Eligibility Criteria

Organizations that meet the following criteria may be considered for funding under the CSIP:

- Organizations, or a branch of the organization, must be located within Durham Region.
- The proposed activities must benefit residents of Durham Region.
- Organizations must operate in compliance with all applicable laws and legislation.

- Organization must be able to provide minimum insurance coverage, including but not limited to Commercial General Liability insurance. Additional insurance requirements may be required at the sole discretion of the Region.
- Applicants must be incorporated as a non-profit organization, with or without charitable status.
 - Unincorporated community organizations may apply under the financial sponsorship of a registered charitable organization that meets all eligibility criteria.
- Priority may be given to organizations that have not previously received CSIP funding.
- Organizations with active funding agreements must be in good standing and up to date with all reporting and contractual requirements.

Financial Sponsorship (Unincorporated Organizations)

Non-incorporated, community-based organizations must designate a Financial Sponsor that is a registered charitable organization meeting all CSIP eligibility criteria.

The Financial Sponsor will:

- Enter into and sign the funding agreement with the Region; and
- Assume legal and financial responsibility for the funds received under the agreement.

Applicants considering financial sponsorship are strongly encouraged to review the [Financial Sponsors section](#) of these guidelines and to contact staff in advance of application submission by emailing funding@durham.ca to discuss eligibility and requirements.

Additional Eligibility Considerations

Please note that individual funding streams may carry additional eligibility criteria or exemptions. Applicants are responsible for reviewing all relevant funding guidelines, resources, and documentation prior to submitting an application.

Ineligibility Criteria

Applications that meet any of the criteria outlined below will not be considered for funding under the CSIP, unless otherwise explicitly permitted.

Ineligible Organizations

The Community Social Investment Program does not provide funding to the following types of organizations:

- Hospitals and post-secondary education institutions.
 - *For additional context, please see [Durham Region Community Investment Grant Policy](#).*

- Organizations where participation in services or programs is conditional upon involvement in religious or political activities.
- For-profit organizations.
 - Eligible non-profit organizations may partner with for-profit entities only where the non-profit organization is the clearly demonstrated program lead and funding recipient.

Ineligible Activities and Costs

Applications will not be considered for funding for the following activities or expenses, unless expressly exempted under a specific funding stream:

- Activities that continue or replicate previously funded CSIP projects are not eligible. Proposals must demonstrate a clear, distinct scope of work from past CSIP or Region funding.
- Religious or political activities, including proselytizing
- Capital construction or major capital infrastructure projects.
- For-profit activities and services.
- Event sponsorships.
- Debt retirement, depreciation, or deficit funding.
- Activities more appropriately funded through other Durham Region policies and programs.
- Direct clinical assessment or treatment.
- Medically regulated therapeutic services.
- Operation or expansion of treatment facilities.
- Settlement services and English-language programming funded by the federal or provincial governments.
- Applications submitted exclusively by government or government-based organizations.
- Projects at the provincial or national scale, unless:
 - A Durham Region-based branch exists; and
 - A clear, direct, and measurable local benefit to Durham residents can be demonstrated.

Application: Two-Step Process

The CSIP uses a two-step application process designed to be accessible, equitable, and supportive of organizations at different stages of development.

Step One: Organizational Assessment Tool

The Organizational Assessment Tool provides an accessible and inclusive entry point for organizations indicating an intent to apply for CSIP funding. This tool ensures that grassroots and emerging organizations have an opportunity to express interest in funding, while also providing the Region with information to identify funding gaps and assess opportunities for sector capacity-building.

The Organizational Assessment is completed online through the Durham Region Funding Portal. It is required for first-time applicant organizations and will be reviewed and validated for new or updated information in subsequent application cycles.

Following submission, applicants may be flagged for review and will receive a notification by email before proceeding to the full funding application. This review process may take up to two to three business days.

During this stage, organizations may be invited to connect with CSIP staff to:

- Review their assessment results; and
- Identify opportunities to strengthen their eligibility or future funding applications.

If an organization is determined to be ineligible to proceed at this stage, CSIP staff may identify supports or capacity-building opportunities to help strengthen eligibility for future funding calls.

Step Two: Funding Application

Funding applications are submitted electronically through the Durham Region Funding Portal. Organizations will be invited to access the full application once their Organizational Assessment has been completed and validated, and an email invitation has been issued.

Applications must be signed by an individual with the authority to bind the organization to a funding agreement and who can attest that all information provided is complete and accurate.

Applications are evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated community need;
- Alignment with identified priorities; and
- Available funding.

Incomplete applications will be deemed ineligible and will not be reviewed.

Supporting Resources

Applicants are encouraged to reference the following guiding documents, data sources, and planning tools when completing their applications:

- [Durham Region Strategic Plan](#)
- [Durham Region Open Data Portal](#)
- [Region of Durham Health Neighborhoods](#)
- [Durham Region Community Safety and Well-Being Plan Info Hub](#)
- [Durham Immigration and Inclusion Community Plan](#)
- [Age-Friendly Strategy and Action Plan](#)
- [Statistics Canada Census Data](#)

- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action for First Nations, Inuit & Métis Peoples](#)
- [Statistics Canada: LIM\(AT\) measures](#)
- [Together We Thrive: Durham's Vital Signs Report 2023](#)
- [Focus on Food: Durham's Vital Signs Report 2024](#)
- [Durham Region Poverty Response Program – What We Heard Report](#)

Application Review Process

The CSIP funding application review process begins immediately following the application submission deadline.

Step One: Administrative Review

All applications are first reviewed by Regional staff to confirm completeness and general eligibility. Applications that are incomplete or do not meet eligibility requirements will not proceed beyond this stage of review.

Step Two: Funding Review Committee Assessment

Applications that meet the general eligibility requirements will be assessed by a Funding Review Committee. The Committee consists of Region of Durham staff, including the Program Manager and other relevant Regional representatives, and may include community partners where appropriate.

Eligible applications are evaluated based on:

- Alignment with CSIP program principles and relevant funding stream criteria
- Demonstrated community need
- Financial sustainability and organizational capacity
- Anticipated outcomes and impacts
- Collaboration and partnerships, where applicable

Final Decision and Notification

All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their funding application.

All funding recommendations and allocations are subject to final approval of the Commissioner of Social Services.

Reporting

Reporting is a key component of the CSIP. Reporting requirements and deadlines will be communicated through the Durham Region Funding Portal.

Successful applicants must be prepared to identify and report on measures used to track both anticipated outputs and outcomes as outlined in their approved funding application. Failure to meet reporting requirements or deadlines, as specified in the funding agreement, may result in delayed or terminated funding payments and may affect eligibility for future CSIP funding.

Sharing Impact

An important component of CSIP reporting is the ability to demonstrate impact through both quantitative and qualitative measures. In addition to numerical data, organizations are encouraged to share stories of impact that illustrate how funded activities have contributed to positive change for individuals and communities.

Examples of qualitative and storytelling tools include:

- Quotes from program participants or staff
- Short videos or photographs
- Case studies or impact summaries
- Testimonials or narrative reports

Both outputs and outcomes may be reported through midterm and final reports, as outlined in the funding agreement.

Understanding Outputs and Outcomes

When developing reporting measures, applicants should consider the distinction between outputs and outcomes.

Outputs

Outputs are the direct products or services delivered as a result of project activities. They are typically quantifiable and can be measured shortly after the activities are completed.

Examples of outputs include:

- Number of workshops delivered
- Number of participants served or trained
- Number of resources or materials distributed
- Number of counseling sessions or support sessions provided

Outcomes

Outcomes describe the broader changes or impacts that occur as a result of project activities and outputs. They reflect improvements in the well-being, knowledge, behaviour, or circumstances of participants or communities. Outcomes are often more qualitative and may take longer to be realized and measured.

Examples of Outcomes:

- Improved mental health and overall well-being of participants
- Increased employment or job readiness
- Enhanced community engagement and social connection
- Reduced vulnerability or poverty-related impacts within the target population
- Increased effectiveness and sustainability of organizational fundraising capacity.

- Strengthened governance structures supporting long-term organizational stability.

Key Differences Between Outputs and Outcomes

Timeframe: Outputs are immediate and short-term; outcomes are longer-term and may take time to become evident.

Measurement: Outputs are typically quantitative and straightforward to measure; outcomes often require more nuanced and qualitative evaluation approaches.

Impact: Outputs reflect what was delivered; outcomes reflect the meaningful changes created by those activities.

Support for Reporting

Organizations requiring support in developing or refining reporting measures are encouraged to contact CSIP staff by emailing funding@durham.ca.

Financial Sponsor

Non-profit groups that are not incorporated must designate a Financial Sponsor that meets CSIP eligibility requirements. The Financial Sponsor is responsible for entering into and signing the funding agreement with the Region and assumes responsibility under the agreement, including, but not limited to, receipt, administration, and reporting of funds.

Organizations applying with a Financial Sponsor are strongly encouraged to establish a formal written agreement between the sponsoring organization and the applicant group. This agreement should clearly outline:

- Roles and responsibilities of each partnering organization
- Process for allocating, managing, and documenting funds received and distributed
- Decision-making authority and governance arrangements
- Conflict resolution processes, should they be required.

Some Financial Sponsors may charge a fee for providing this service. Financial sponsorship fees are considered eligible expenses under CSIP and may be included in the project budget.

Applicants requiring a Financial Sponsor are encouraged to contact the CSIP team prior to application submission to discuss eligibility and requirements by emailing funding@durham.ca.

Staff Supports

If you have any questions about the funding process or application requirements, CSIP staff are available to provide support.

Applicants who require assistance to complete their application, clarification on eligibility or documentation, or who need an alternative format to submit their application are encouraged to contact the funding team by emailing funding@durham.ca to connect with a staff member.

Region of Durham Right to Revise

The Region of Durham reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to:

- a. Revise the call for application schedule;
- b. Revise the call for application and/or to issue amendments to the call;
- c. Award funding in an amount less than the amount requested; and/or
- d. Reject, cancel, or re-issue the call for applications, in whole or in part, where it is deemed to be in the best interest of the Region of Durham, without penalty and prior to the execution of a funding agreement.

No Region of Durham Obligation

This call for application does not commit the Region of Durham, in any way, to select a preferred application, or to proceed to negotiations for an agreement, or to award any agreement. The Region of Durham reserves the right to reject all applications and/or terminate this call for application process at any time.

Applicant's Expenses

Applicants are solely responsible for their own expenses in preparing, and submitting, applications, and for any costs incurred by the applicant in meetings, negotiations or discussions with the Region of Durham or its representatives relating to, or arising from, this call for applications.

The Region of Durham and its representatives, agents, and advisors will not be liable to any applicant for any claims, whether for costs, expenses, losses, or damages, or for any other matter whatsoever, incurred by the applicant in preparing and submitting an application, or participating in negotiations for an agreement, or other activity related to or arising out of this call for application.

No Contract

By submitting an application and participating in the process as outlined in the call for applications, applicants expressly agree that no contract for any kind for services is formed under, or arises from, this call for application, prior to the signing of a formal funding agreement.

Conflict of Interest

An applicant shall disclose in the application any potential, actual or perceived conflicts of interest and existing business relationships it may have with the Region of Durham, its elected or appointed officials, representatives, employees, funded agencies, or funders. An applicant must disclose any Relationship of Close Proximity defined as a relationship between any employee, director, officer or volunteer of the applicant(s) and Region of Durham where they are or have served as a director, a family member, a past employee, or a known future employee. The Region of Durham may rely on such disclosure.

Confidentiality

All submissions become the property of the Region of Durham and will not be returned to the applicant. All submissions will be held in confidence by the Region of Durham unless otherwise required by law. Applicants should be aware the Region of Durham is subject to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)* of Ontario. Applicants acknowledge that the terms of the call for applications or of any funding agreement entered into between an applicant and the Region of Durham pursuant to this call for applications, including the name of the applicant, the consideration, term, and details of the agreement, may be subject to disclosure under *MFIPPA*. To avoid disqualification, all applicants are expected to ensure the confidentiality of this call for applications.

Applicants agree that outcome reports and stories of impact may be used in communications material and future reports to Council to promote program success and guide program development.

Property of the Owner

All materials submitted in response to this call for applications will become the property of the Region of Durham upon delivery to the program manager and will not be returned to the applicant. The applicant's written response to the call for applications, or portions thereof, may also become a part of the agreement.

Licensing

Upon award, the applicant will be responsible for a strict adherence to all Federal, Provincial, and Municipal codes and by-laws and must obtain all permits and licenses as applicable.

Safety Codes and Regulations

Upon award, the applicant must adhere to all safety rules, regulations, and labour codes in effect in all jurisdictions where the work is to be performed.

Indemnity and Insurance

The applicant agrees to indemnify and save harmless the Region of Durham for any claim demand arising out of the performance by the applicant of the contract.

The applicant agrees to obtain and maintain adequate insurance coverage relating to the operations and liability assumed under the contract in form and substance satisfactory to the Region of Durham and, if so requested, deliver copies of such insurance policies or certificates evidencing the same to the Region of Durham.

The applicant agrees to maintain Workers' Compensation coverage in accordance with the requirements of the [Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) if required and provide evidence of compliance with the *Act* as may be requested at any time by the Region of Durham.